DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 053 PS 024 968

AUTHOR Smith, Anne B.
TITLE Early Childhood Educare: Quality Programmes which Care and Educate.
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 16p.; In: "Childhood Education: International Perspectives," see PS 024 960.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Caregiver Child Relationship; *Child Development; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; Interaction
IDENTIFIERS Cultural Values; Developmentally Appropriate Programs; *Educare; Intersubjectivity; Quality Indicators; Scaffolding; *Vygotsky (Lev S); Zone of Proximal Development

ABSTRACT

There is currently widespread international concern with delivering high-quality early childhood education and care to young children. Crucial to this effort is an appropriate way of defining and monitoring quality. This article explores the micro-context of quality care, that is, the nature of interactions between children and others (both teachers and peers). The article begins by defining "educare," a term which it adopts as appropriate for what should be occurring in early childhood educational settings. It next moves into a discussion of a sociocultural framework of child development within the educare perspective, arguing against developmentally appropriate practice and in favor of increased attention to the social and cultural context of development and adults' role in it. The article then presents five principles of quality in educare settings, based largely on Vygotsky's ideas on child development (for example, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding) as the internalization of social interactions and processes. The article then provides a more detailed discussion of some of these components of quality, such as letting learning drive development (rather than vice versa), creating intersubjectivity, recognizing the cultural context of educational goals, and understanding children's active role in the developmental process. Contains 34 references. (EV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 403 053

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE: QUALITY PROGRAMMES WHICH CARE AND EDUCATE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Eila Estola
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Anne B. Smith
University of Otago
Dunedin, New Zealand

here is a widespread international concern currently with delivering high uality early childhood education and care to young children. It is not enough nd never has been, to simply provide any early childhood services for hildren. If we are to make the best use of every country's most precious esource, its children, we must give a lot of care and attention to what we ıean by quality, and through whatever means possible, deliver the re-ources necessary to foster and nurture children's development. It is foolish, oth in human and economic terms, to do otherwise. My country has just nnounced some increases in funding (about $38 million or FIM120 million) or early childhood education. I am delighted with this news and with the ccompanying policy they have announced that the funding will be contin-ent on meeting quality criteria. But it is absolutely crucial that an appro-riate way of defining and monitoring quality is devised. This is a critical ssue for New Zealand at the moment as it is for many other countries.

I have thought for many years about what constitutes quality and been a roponent of policies which provide incentives for early childhood centres to eliver quality. I do not want to talk today about my political involvement in arly childhood education or about the broader structural and regulatable haracteristics of quality, but instead to ask you to come with me on a ourney which asks some fundamental theoretical questions about develop-ıent, and how we can define quality contexts for children's development. I ill concentrate today on what Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls the microsystem that is the child's most immediate context for development. I will not talk bout the wider context for development, the exosystem and macrosystem the things which are reflected in the structural qualities of early childhood ettings.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

My country and yours are very different in the structure of our education and care systems. In New Zealand children start school at 5 years of age and most children enter school at or near the fifth birthday, although school is not compulsory until 6. We have a variety of early childhood services for under five year old children provided by kindergartens, childcare centres, playcentres, family day care, Te Kohanga Reo, and Pacific Island Language nests (the last two centres immerse children in their own language - Maori or a Pacific Island language). All of our 5 to 7 year-old children are in the junior classes of primary schools. I do not want to say any more about structure because I believe that quality early childhood educare can be delivered within very differently structured settings, although structural factors do make a difference. The crucial element of quality that I want to discuss today is the principles which should underlay the interactions between children and other people (both teachers and peers) and the nature of the early childhood curriculum.

Educare

First I want to discuss what I mean by "educare". Early childhood educare is not a new concept. It has been used in the United States (Caldwell, 1991), in the United Kingdom (Calder, 1990; David, 1990; Moss, 1992) in New Zealand (Smith, 1987; Smith & Swain, 1988; Smith, 1988) and probably elsewhere.

The concept of educare is an important one in early childhood because it challenges the view that education and care are separable components of early childhood environments (either in homes or centres). Care, with its connotations of custodial physical caregiving, watching over and affection, has in the past been thought to be quite different from education, which involves planned educational activities designed to enhance children's learning. In many countries it is even assumed that care is something that is important for children under 3 years of age or for children who are away from their parents for a full day (in day care centres) and education is something for pre-school centres or schools for 4 to 7 year-olds to look after. I want to dispute that view and say that it is important for both care and education to be incorporated in all early childhood services, no matter how old the child, whether the context is a centre or a home, or how long the child is away from her parents.

Peter Moss (1992) has also argued against the old divisions between care and education. He finds the word "educare" clumsy but agrees that it carries the appropriate meaning. I believe that we can get used to words which sound clumsy at first - this is how language evolves. (This makes me think back to the arguments in favour or retaining sexist language such as the use of chairperson. If there is a need for a change in thinking then there may

need to be a change in language, however unfamiliar and unattractive it may initially sound.)

The prevailing view that care is somehow inferior to education is illustrated in a discussion in Athey's (1990) book. She cites Earwaker's four uses of the word education. The "weakest" (concept A) definition of education refers to custodial care which has connotations of "bringing up" or "rearing" while the strongest (concept D) involves "developing knowledge and understanding in depth and breadth in worth-while directions" (p10). She acknowledges that Concept D amalgamates and includes earlier notions like Concept A. This separation of care and education, however, with knowledge being at the upper end of the scale and care at the lower end, ignores that it is impossible to separate care from education.

The term educare was coined in recognition that for young children there can be no meaningful distinction between care and education. Small children do not easily learn in environments where their physical and emotional well being is not nurtured. Warm, secure and responsive human environments also promote learning and development. Cold, restrictive and unsafe environments retard them. Drummond & Nutbrown (1992) explain that:

> ..the care and education of young children are not two separate activities. In our work as educators, we both care and educate. Quality care is educational, and quality education is caring. Children's enhanced learning and development are the outcomes of our work in whatever setting (p103).

Educare is provided in caring, responsive social contexts where adult-child and child-child interactions and opportunities for play and exploration promote children's social and intellectual development. Educare services are organised, supervised programmes with social and educational goals for children in the temporary absence of their parents.

A Sociocultural Framework for Development in an Educare Perspective

I have argued (Smith, 1992) that it is important for the early childhood field to move towards a more relevant theoretical framework for early childhood educare than the predominantly Piagetian approach which has been part of our history. The whole notion of Developmentally Appropriate Practice, which originated in the United States but has had a strong influence all over the world is founded on an interpretation of Piaget. The concept of DAP assumes universal predictable changes in children's development at particular ages and stages, regardless of context. Such changes in development are taken as the framework within which teachers prepare and plan appropriate curricula and experiences for children (Fleer, 1994). Curriculum materials should be introduced to children only *after* a child has attained a particular level of mental ability (Elkind, 1989). It is assumed that learning

comes about through children discovering the world spontaneously through their own self-directed play within a resource-rich environment, with as little as possible intervention from the teacher. The problem with the term "Developmentally Appropriate Practice", is that it implies that children's development guides early childhood centre practice, while in reality early childhood centre practice should guide children's development. This means that teachers should have ideas about the goals of early childhood educare and set about implementing those ideas.

My position is that it is important to give much more attention to the social and cultural context of development and less to the emergence of development from within the individual child without adult participation. I am concerned at the large individual differences in the way which children are capable of spontaneously discovering their environment. Some children do actively explore and find meaning in a resource rich environment, others do not. In my view such differences are not the result of variations in the rate of biologically determined development for which one must wait, but rather of the sensitivity of the social partners and richness of the scripts and events which such children have experienced. If all children are to acquire more understanding of their environment then they need to have adults and peers engage in tasks with them, to extend their understanding through shared experience of relevant scripts and events.

I am uneasy with the idea of building our curricula on normatively based "developmentally appropriate practice" and have moved much more towards a sociocultural perspective. The sociocultural perspective emerged out of Vygotsky's work more than 60 years ago, but was discovered by the West only in the 1960's. Jerome Bruner, David Wood and Michael Cole were some of the psychologists who discovered the relevance of Vygotsky and applied it to problems of education, because above all Vygotsky's theory is a theory of education. Among the many current researchers advocating a sociocultural view are Courtney Cazden, Ellice Forman, and Ronald Gallimore, Barbara Rogoff, Roland Tharp, Jean Valsiner and James Wertsch. There are as yet few writers who have applied the theory to early childhood education. Marilyn Fleer (1991, 1992, 1994) from the University of Canberra has, however, written extensively from this framework and Kathy Sylva and Tricia David from England show sympathy towards it.

I would like to outline what I see as the key principles of sociocultural theory before going on to talk about how to apply these to developing quality early childhood curricula and pedagogy.

Principles Behind Developing Quality Educare Settings:

1. All development begins with social interaction - development consists of the internalization of social processes.

2. Learning drives development rather than development drives learning.

3. Close interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding between social partners facilitates learning and development.

4. The goals of development are culturally determined.

5. Children have an active role in constructing their own unique understanding within the cultural context.

The sociocultural approach emphasizes that thinking is not a characteristic of the child only but of the child-in-social-activities with others (Moll & Whitmore, 1992). The focus is on the sociocultural system within which children learn, which is jointly created by children and adults in an inter-dependent relationship. According to Vygotsky's theory, children participate in cultural activities with skilled partners and come to internalize the tools for thinking they have practiced in social situations.

Vygotsky showed that children could perform much more skillfully together with others than they could alone. He said that until children have acquired competence in developing skills, they require help and supervision. Vygotsky's concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development* is a key one in his theory to education.

> We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the *zone of proximal development*; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when a child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation-operation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement (Vygotsky, 1978, p90).

Vygotsky made a distinction between the actual developmental level of the child and the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is:

> ..the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (1978, p86).

The ZPD is a dynamic region of sensitivity to learning in which children develop through participation with more experienced members of the culture. It is an area of awakening development. Rogoff (1990) has coined the term "guided participation" to include both the notion of guidance (or scaffolding) and participation in culturally valued activities.

Scaffolding is the guidance and interactional support given by a tutor in the zone of proximal development. Bruner (1985) explains scaffolding as permitting children to do as much as they can by themselves while what they cannot do is filled in by the mother (or other tutor)'s activities. There are differences in the quantity and quality of scaffolding support given to children (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). The quantity issue refers to how high the scaffold is, at what level and how long it is kept in place, while the quality issue is concerned with the different ways in which help is offered, through

directing attention, modeling, asking questions or giving encouragement for example. Ideally children, initially spectators, becomes participants and with the support of an adult learn the rules, grasp the meanings and become able to provide assistance to themselves and control their own behaviour. In the process of learning the tutor provides "a vicarious form of consciousness" (Bruner, 1985) which children take over for themselves after the task has been mastered.

> What the child develops... (is) 'concepts' that are jointly constructed through those that embody them, together with ways of doing and thinking that are cultural practices, recreated with children through processes of formal and informal teaching (Wood, 1986, p95).

Looking at early childhood educare from a sociocultural perspective puts the emphasis right where it should be, on the role of the teacher. Teachers need to be involved in a dynamic interactive relationship with children, not through a didactic approach, but through being sensitively attuned to children's abilities, interests and strengths and being accessible enough to provide scaffolding which extends them and builds bridges between the known and the unknown.

One example of scaffolding in the ZPD given by Greenfield (1984) is of Mexican girls learning to weave. The girls were observed weaving with a teacher (usually the mother or a close relative). Beginners produced woven material that was as skillful as that produced by the expert but this was because the teacher sensitively aided the learners where necessary. At the beginning teachers took over the weaving at more technically difficult parts (e.g. selvaging). In the early learning cycles teachers participated in the weaving about 65 % of the time but in later cycles they did so only 16 % of the time. They tuned their verbal support to the level of the weaver. They gave more verbal commands to the inexperienced weavers and more statements to the experienced ones. As weavers became more experienced, they became increasingly self regulated.

Learning drives Development

Vygotsky viewed matching learning tasks to developmental levels already reached as ineffective. He viewed learning in such situations as lagging behind development rather than stimulating new development (Vygotsky, 1978). The idea of "developmental appropriateness" assumes that learning experiences for children should be designed according to their appropriate stage of development. In our New Zealand system an example of this was the design of a mathematics syllabus which did not introduce numbers larger than 9 until children were at least 7 on the mistaken assumption that younger children could not cope with large numbers. Vygotsky emphasized that teaching had to proceed ahead of development in order to awaken those functions in the process of maturing. Learning is not separable from develop-

ment and "good learning" is in advance of development. Teaching leads instead of follows children's development. Children may start a task only half understanding it, but by engaging in meaningful goal directed activity with a more skilled partner, they gradually acquire more and more independent understanding. If the teacher is truly working in the child's ZPD she is actually moving the child forward in her understanding, instead of leaving her in the original state. This will probably not occur without the child having an active role and without the adult being sensitive to the child's understanding.

Intersubjectivity - interpersonal relationships

A caring and responsive adult-child (or child-child) relationship is necessary before children can acquire intellectual skills through social interactions. Tutor and learner need to have a shared understanding of the purposes, goals, tools and contexts of the task (McNaughton, 1991) since dialogue is the starting point of thought. Children need to feel comfortable and accepted in their early childhood settings. Rogoff argues that intersubjectivity or a shared focus of understanding and purpose, which is deeply embedded in nurturing and caring relationships, is the foundation of cognitive development. She says that "The traditional distinctions among cognitive, affective and social processes becomes blurred once we focus on thinking" and goes on to quote Vygotsky:

> Thought is not born of other thoughts. Thought has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotion. The affective and volitional tendency stands behind thought (Vygotsky, 1987, p282).

McNaughton (1991) believes that a failure to establish intersubjectivity poses great difficulties for effective learning. Children and teachers can have very different understandings of what the goals of a task are, or how people should talk together (p140). When tutor and learner achieve intersubjectivity they do not misunderstand each other and contribute reciprocally to the interaction. Children gradually become the initiators. Intersubjectivity is achieved through shared meaning for signs and symbols which develops in the context of interaction over joint activity. It is only through communication within a shared frame of reference that children can internalize and construct their own understandings.

This example from Dorothy White (1954), a librarian mother's, *A Book for Baby* illustrates the mother's ability to see things from her two year-old daughter's point of view in this example:

> Carol could not understand 'Here I am. Alan Richard is my name.' She only understands that when I say 'I', I mean myself; and when she says 'I' she means herself. She cannot grasp an 'I' referring to a third party, the boy in the book. Carol sees this as, 'Here is a little boy. This is his Daddy.' The text therefore requires constant modification.

Situations where the teacher has no real knowledge or understanding of children do not provide fertile ground for quality educare programmes. I am very concerned about the children who receive very little teacher attention, the so-called "invisible children" with whom there has been no intersubjectivity at all established. Waterhouse (1995) has recently reported an interesting study of how teachers construct their knowledge of children's identity in the beginning years of school. Teachers knowledge of children's identity was shown through a series of interviews and videos done over 4 years. Waterhouse showed that many children came into the category of "average" children who conformed to classroom activity to such a degree that they became invisible to the teacher. So despite a child-centred commitment to individualism, the reality was that there were many children who were on the margins of teacher attention. These children were not really perceived as a problem or as special - they probably survived in the classroom but how much did they learn. If we acknowledge the importance of adult/child intersubjectivity it is important for teachers to get to know **every** child.

One problem with the concept of intersubjectivity is that it has often been interpreted as something that can only develop within one-to-one situations, although Young-Loveridge, Carr & Peters (1995) found that 4 year-old experts at number (compared to novices) spent much more time either in pairs with an adult or in small groups with an adult. Intersubjectivity can develop in small classroom groups where there is a possibility for people to work together informally on common goals in a consistent way so that they can get to know each other. Developing intersubjectivity requires an active attempt by teachers to diagnose and observe what children understand and do not understand because it is the task of the teacher to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown. Teachers are usually better able to sensitively observe and interpret children's behaviour when they know them well and are engaged in reciprocal activities with them, rather than in a distant, controlling, formal and hierarchical relationship. The best contexts are where children reveal understandings so that teachers can develop, extend, correct or improve these.

> The underlying principle is that the more informal the learning environment, the greater the teacher's access to the learners' representations, understandings and misunderstandings (Katz & Chard, 1990, p44).

But Katz & Chard argue for optimal informality. Too much informality can occur in some settings. Teachers who "supervise" large groups with the children engaged in largely undirected free play are in a poor position to achieve intersubjectivity with children. They are unable to engage with children in the sort of sustained way that is necessary for learning in the ZPD to occur. They are too busy with other demands on their attention to achieve any kind of joint focus with children.

Young-Loveridge et al (1995) provide a very interesting running record of a number novice child who is unable to count beyond 3 and counts "one, two, eight". The teacher in a busy kindergarten starts to work with her on a

counting sequence in the context of a computer game, but the telephone rings so the teacher asks some of the other more expert children to help the novice child. The other children do help for a while but they gradually take over the game, the novice child quietly loses interest in the game and moves on to another activity. There are countless such examples of missed opportunities within settings where the teacher is not able to work on a sustained basis with one or a small number of children, and children never get to solve the problem or move forward in their thinking.

Teachers need to know what children can do and understand. They must be acutely observant and aware in order to effectively create appropriate learning activities in the ZPD. Drummond and Nutbrown (1992) write of an interesting study by Prosser where children make assessments of themselves and are aware of other people's assessment of them. Children from an early age can contribute to the process of assessment. They are a partner in the process of assessing their learning. Drummond and Prosser see careful observation as an essential tool for teachers, to illuminate the future and improve the present. It can help to identify "the learning that is about to take place" (p90).

Culturally Determined Goals

I believe that for years we, in early childhood, have had the mistaken belief that we could discover the goals of development by looking at the child. I have been as guilty as anyone of this mistaken view. In 1988 I said that early childhood education should not have curriculum goals, it should have developmental goals. What I really meant was a restatement of the DAP philosophy that by looking at what children are able to do we should encourage them to do what "normally" comes next in the stages of development. We have deluded ourselves that the child we see is an isolated individual, independent of her social context. By looking at children within our particular cultural context, we are really looking at a version of ourselves, already strongly influenced by our joint cultural heritage.

According to Rogoff (1992): "Each community's valued skills constitute the local goals of development" p233). She sees development as multidirectional rather than as aimed at specific endpoints. To the extent that we share physical and biological features as a species there are some commonalties across cultures but child development involves appropriation of the intellectual tools and skills of the surrounding cultural community. Rogoff sees development as transformation in thinking which comes about as a response to participation in the problems of everyday life. The richer, more meaningful and the more active is children's participation in diverse activities, the greater the repertoire of social and cognitive skills that they will acquire.

To understand development it is essential to understand cultures. Traditionally in Western cultures, skill in academic activities involving scientific, literate and numerate activities are those that are valued. It is important to realize these skills are valued within particular cultural frameworks rather than a necessary endpoint to be aspired to be all cultures. Cultures vary in their institutions, their technologies and their other cultural tools. One of the most powerful cultural tools is language but we should not forget other non verbal forms of communication according to Rogoff (1990). Bahktin's (Wertsch, 1990) theory suggests that children learn cultural concepts, values and ideas as they learn language but they do have an individual input or interpretation. He described words as being "half ours and half someone else's". Vygotsky (1978) said "Just as the mold gives shape to a substance, words can shape an activity into a structure". So language itself is an important medium for transferring cultural content.

In Western type early childhood education, we have valued play as a way of allowing children to explore spontaneously. Yet David (1992) points out that even play is affected by culture. She discusses the English tradition of Susan Isaacs and the Nursery Schools Association which valued play. In a discussion with Danish pre-school staff, she asked whether the staff would help children set up a hairdresser's shop with appointment books, invoices etc. She was told that these activities were part of societal pressure on children into accepting literacy. Is this not an example of refusing to acknowledge that early childhood settings have a role in passing on culturally valued skills.? I would certainly acknowledge that the values passed on should not always be those of the dominant culture, but surely we must acknowledge and celebrate that early childhood programmes transmit cultural values.

Rogoff (1992) found in her study of US and Mayan toddlers that when children interact with adults it is in the context of adult work rather than play. Play is seen as the domain for peer interaction and Mayan mothers were embarrassed by the idea of playing with their children. US mothers were on the other hand very friendly and playful with their children. In New Zealand, Maori Language Nests or Nga Kohanga Reo do not accept the predominantly European emphasis on play within their centres. Culturally valued styles and values, such as whanaungatanga, awhina, tuakana-teina relationships as well as the Maori language were implicit in the programme (Hohepa, Smith, Smith & McNaughton, 1991). For example children learn about their whakapapa, first their immediate family and later their hapu and iwi (tribal and sub-tribal) link. They practice mihimihi, a formal mode of self introduction, traditional in Maori culture. The Kohanga Reo setting provides a rich context for the negotiation of shared meanings within a primarily Maori context.

I am not arguing against play being an integral part of the early childhood curriculum. Indeed Vygotsky was a great advocate of play (he really meant collaborative imaginative play) because he believed that play liberated children from situational constraints and allowed them to experiment with meaning. In Vygotsky's view, play creates a zone of proximal development

for the child. I do, however, agree with David's point that there are other valuable contexts for learning besides play. Involvement in joint collaborative goal directed activity with adults or peers over culturally valued activities, such as laying the table or baking a cake, can also provide a rich context for learning.

The lesson that I take from the sociocultural perspective on the curriculum is that we need to acknowledge that we have culturally determined goals in early childhood education settings. It is time to admit that these do not come solely from within the child and to work together with parents in making more explicit and public the shared goals which underlay our early childhood programmes. In New Zealand for the first time in the last few years we have codified an early childhood curriculum in a written form as a way to guide and support early childhood teachers in their work. Goals for early childhood are a value issue but these values have often in the past been implicit rather than explicit. They should be flexible rather than rigid, able to be modified with social circumstances, to be responsive to the views of parents and the wider community and take into account multicultural participants in early childhood settings not just the dominant cultural group. There also needs to be room for local variations depending on the particular social, economic and cultural context of the early childhood setting. I am opposed to the whole world following the US DAP model, though I acknowledge that there is much that is shared and valuable. Indeed I am always rather astonished at the degree of common ground I find when I meet people in international forums. I like the approach taken by the Australian Accreditation scheme, where there have been more than 50 criteria of quality early childhood education developed through extensive consultation and (let's be honest!) looking at overseas models like the DAP. But the individual centre is encouraged to develop 10 local criteria which are of particular relevance to their own centre.

Children's Active Role

The ZPD sometimes conjures up visions of children as the passive recipients of an adult's didactic efforts (Packer, 1992). Internalization of social interaction does not mean that skills and information from outside the child are simply transferred to inside the child! Children do not passively absorb the strategies of the adult. They take an active inventive role and reconstruct the task through their own understanding. This process has been called "guided reinvention" by Tharp and Gallimore (1988). Teaching is not seen as the transmission of knowledge but as a process of sharing meanings and understandings. Children themselves take an important role in these negotiations about meaning (David, 1992). Rogoff (1990) also stresses the active participation of children in their own development:

> Children seek, structure, and even demand the assistance of those around them in learning how to solve problems of all kinds. They actively observe social activities, participating as they can. I stress the complementary roles of children and caregivers in fostering children's development (p 16).

Rogoff (1990) also shows how children's creativity can develop within sociocultural contexts. She says that social processes do not necessarily foster reproduction of knowledge. In the process of acquiring skills and information the child transforms them. When children are involved in social interaction they ignore some aspects of the situation and participate in others and they change what they participate in to suit their uses. Creativity builds on existing ideas and technologies within existing institutions. Creativity involves forging new connections and reformulating existing ideas. Collaborative and dialogic involvement of people working on similar issues is a rich context for creativity.

> Individuals transform culture as they appropriate its practices, carrying them forward to the next generation in altered form to fit the needs of their particular generation and circumstances (Rogoff, 1990, p198).

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by talking about the critical role of the teacher and of a well thought out early childhood curriculum in providing high quality early childhood programmes. I believe that it is important for teachers have a rationale for their activities, or if you like a pedagogy. Teachers always have a pedagogy, whether it is conscious or unconscious (Athey, 1990). My argument is that a pedagogy should be conscious - that teachers should know what they are doing, why they are doing it and be able to reflect in a collaborative way with colleagues and parents about the success of their programmes. This is part of being a professional early childhood educarer.

I do not want to prescribe anyone's pedagogy, but my preference is for a pedagogy which acknowledges the awesome power of the teacher in affecting children's development and an understanding that if teachers observe children, understand their cultural framework and develop close relationships with them, and informally interact with them over planned activities allowing active participation of the child, they will have much more power for positive change. If the teacher is aware of the need to take advantage of every opportunity to support learning, then there will be far fewer missed opportunities and more potential for positive change.

Secondly I am a strong advocate of a curriculum which leads rather than follows child development. Every society needs to work out for itself what it values and wants to encourage in its early childhood programmes. The nature of good quality early childhood educare is a value issues (Moss & Pence, 1994). There are infinite possibilities for development but as Lillian Katz (1990) says, just because children **can** do things does not mean it that

they **should** be doing them. We should not all blindly follow U.S. practice and model Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Each society need to carefully, consciously and inclusively consider what kind of activities are worthwhile for children to be participating in and what kind of skills and dispositions we want our children to have. We have started on that process in New Zealand. The curriculum should not be inflexible, but should stimulate teachers and parents to collaborate and reflect on how to enrich children's development. I am not talking about the didactic transmission of pre-formulated knowledge but, as Gordon Wells (1985) describes it, an attempt to negotiate shared meanings and understandings with children so that children can themselves shape the sequencing and pattern of their education.

References

Athey, C. (1990) *Extending thought in young children.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing Co.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1985) Vygotsky: a historical and conceptual perspective. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives,* (pp. 21-34). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Calder, P. (1990) Educare can advantage the under threes. National Childrens Bureau .

Caldwell, B. (1991) Educare: New product, new future. *Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, 12(3),* 199-205.

David, T. (1990) *Under Five - Under-Educated?* Open University Press, Buckingham.

David, T. (1992) Curriculum in the early years. In G. Pugh (Ed.), *Contemporary issues in the early years,* (pp. 71-86). London: National Children's Bureau/ Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Drummond, M. J., & Nutbrown, C. (1992) Observing and assessing young children, In G. Pugh (Ed.) *Contemporary Issues in the Early Years,* (pp. 87-103). London: National Children's Bureau/Paul Chapman.

Elkind, D. (1989) The hurried child. Developmental appropriate practice: Philosophical and practical implications. *Phi Delta Kappan, 71* (2), 113-117.

Fleer, M. (1991) Towards a theory of scaffolded early childhood science education. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 16*(3), 14-22.

Fleer, M. (1992) From Piaget to Vygotsky: Moving into a new era of early childhood education. In B. Lambert (Ed.) *Changing faces: the early childhood profession in Australia.* Canberra: Australian Early Childhood Association.

Fleer, M. (1994) *Does cognition lead development or does development lead cognition* (Unpublished paper). Canberra: University of Canberra.

Greenfield, P. M. (1984) A theory of the teacher in the learning activities of everyday life. In B. Rogoff & J. Lave (Eds.) *Everyday cognition: its development in social context.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 117-138.

Hohepa, M., Smith, G.H. , Smith, L.T. & McNaughton, S. (1992) Te kohanga reo ako it te reo Maori: Te kohanga reo as a context for language learning. *Educational Psychology, 12* (3 & 4), 333-341.

Katz, L.G. & Chard, S.C. (1990) *Engaging Children's Minds: the Project Approach.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.

McNaughton, S. (1991) The faces of instruction: models of how children learn from tutors. In J. Morss & T. Linzey *Growing Up.* Auckland: Longman Paul.

Moll, L.C. & Whitmore, K. F. (1993) Vygotsky in classroom practice: moving from individual transmission to social transaction. In E. A. Forman, N. Minick & C.A. Stone (Eds). *Contexts for Learning: Sociocultural Dynamics in Children's Development.* (pp 19-42) New York: Oxford

Moss, P. (1992) Perspectives from Europe. In G. Pugh (Ed.) *Contemporary issues in the early years:* London: Paul Chapman/National Children's Bureau.

Moss, P. & Pence, A. (1994*) Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services.* London: Paul Chapman Pub Ltd.

Rogoff, B. (1990) *Apprenticeship in thinking: cognitive development in social context.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Rogoff, B., Mosier, C., Mistry, J., & Goncu, A. (1993) Toddlers' guided participation with their caregivers in cultural activity. In E. A. Forman, N. Minick & C.A. Stone (Eds). *Contexts for Learning: Sociocultural Dynamics in Children's Development.* (pp 230-253) New York: Oxford University Press.

Smith, A. B. (1987) Recent developments in early childhood "educare" in New Zealand. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 19* (2), 33-43.

Smith, A. B. (1988) Education and care components in New Zealand childcare centres and kindergartens. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 13*(3), 31-36.

Smith, A. (1992) Early childhood educare: Seeking a theoretical framework in Vygotsky's work. *International Journal of Early Years Learning,* 1(1), 47-61.

Smith, A.B. & Swain, D.A. (1988) *Childcare in New Zealand: People, Programmes, Politics.* Wellington: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press.

Tharp, R.G. & Gallimore, R. (1988) *Rousing Minds to Life.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in Society: the development of higher psychological processes.* London: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1987) Thinking and speech. In R. W. Rieber & A. S. Carlton (Eds) *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky.* New York: Plenum Books.

Waterhouse, S. (1995) The invisibility of the 'average' child in the early years. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 3* (1), 24-38.

Wells, G. *Language development in the preschool years*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J. (1991) *Voices of the Mind.: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

White, D. (1954) *Books before five*. Wellington: NZCER.

Wood, D. (1986) Aspects of teaching and learning. In M. Richards and P. Light (Eds). *Children of social worlds*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 191-212.

Young-Loveridge, J. Carr, M. & Peters, S. (1995) *Enhancing the Mathematics of 4 year-olds: The EMI-4's Study*. School of Education, Waikato University.